GENDER MAINSTREAMING

AN OVERVIEW

United Nations

Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues
and Advancement of Women

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Foreword

Gender mainstreaming was established as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The ECOSOC agreed conclusions (1997/2) established some important overall principles for gender mainstreaming. A letter from the Secretary-General to heads of all United Nations entities (13 October 1997) provided further concrete directives. The General Assembly twenty-third special session to follow up implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (June 2000) enhanced the mainstreaming mandate within the United Nations. More recently, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution (ECOSOC resolution 2001/41) on gender mainstreaming (July 2001) which calls on the Economic and Social Council to ensure that gender perspectives are taken into account in all its work, including in the work of its functional commissions, and recommends a five-year review of the implementation of the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2.

Clear intergovernmental mandates for gender mainstreaming have been developed for all the major areas of the work of the United Nations, including disarmament, poverty reduction, macro-economics, health, education and trade. The Security Council resolution 1325, adopted in October 2000, outlines the importance of giving greater attention to gender perspectives in peace support operations. Specific mandates also exist for ensuring that gender perspectives are taken into account in the major planning processes and documents within the United Nations, the medium-term plans, programme budgets and programme assessments (for example, General Assembly resolution of December 1997 (A/Res/52/100).

The ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2 defines gender mainstreaming as: *"...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."* Gender mainstreaming entails bringing the perceptions, experience, knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy-making, planning and decision-making. Mainstreaming should situate gender equality issues at the centre of analyses and policy decisions, medium-term plans, pro-

gramme budgets, and institutional structures and processes. This requires explicit, systematic attention to relevant gender perspectives in all areas of the work of the United Nations.

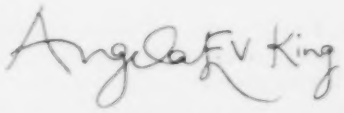
While mainstreaming is clearly essential for securing human rights and social justice for women as well as men, it also increasingly recognized that incorporating gender perspectives in different areas of development ensures the effective achievement of other social and economic goals. Mainstreaming can reveal a need for changes in goals, strategies and actions to ensure that both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from development processes. This may lead to changes in organizations – structures, procedures and cultures – to create organizational environments which are conducive to the promotion of gender equality.

Over the past decade the understanding of, and commitment to, gender mainstreaming has increased significantly within the United Nations. Across the United Nations system policies on gender equality and strategies for implementing gender mainstreaming have been developed; research on gender perspectives in different areas and the sex-disaggregation of data has increased; considerable knowledge of the gender perspectives in different areas of work of the United Nations has been documented; and important institutional measures have been adopted to increase the awareness, knowledge, and capacity of professional staff for implementing gender mainstreaming, including training programmes and gender focal point systems.

A number of persistent constraints remain, however, to be addressed, including conceptual confusion, inadequate understanding of the linkages between gender perspectives and different areas of the work of the United Nations and gaps in capacity to address gender perspectives once identified. Strategies have been put in place to address these constraints, including fact sheets on the concepts underlying gender mainstreaming, briefing notes on the linkages between gender and different sectors and competence development programmes. The lack of understanding of *"HOW"* gender perspectives can be identified and addressed remains one of the most serious constraints. This publication has been developed with the specific purpose of providing support in this area. Further materials will be developed to increase the capacity of professional staff to incorporate gender perspectives into their work.

An important point, which should be raised in all discussions of gender mainstreaming, is that the strategy of gender mainstreaming does not in any way preclude the need for specific targeted interventions to address women's empowerment and gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action calls for a dual strategy – gender mainstreaming complemented with inputs designed

to address specific gaps or problems faced in the promotion of gender equality. Similarly, gender mainstreaming does not do away with the need for gender experts or catalysts. On the contrary, improving the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the United Nations over the coming decade will require the inputs of such experts, working in a catalytic manner to deepen the awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity of all professional staff. Additional, not fewer, resources will be required to support the important work of gender specialists, gender focal points and gender units throughout the system.



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1. Introduction

Gender equality as the goal – gender mainstreaming as the strategy

Gender equality is a goal that has been accepted by governments and international organizations. It is enshrined in international agreements and commitments. There are many ongoing discussions about what equality means (and does not mean) in practice and how to achieve it.

It is clear that there are global patterns to inequality between women and men. For example, women tend to suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners more often than men; women's political participation and their representation in decision-making structures lag behind men's; women and men have different economic opportunities; women are over-represented among the poor; and women and girls make up the majority of people trafficked and involved in the sex trade. These issues – and others – need to be addressed in efforts to promote gender equality.

Achieving greater equality between women and men will require changes at many levels, including changes in attitudes and relationships, changes in institutions and legal frameworks, changes in economic institutions, and changes in political decision-making structures.

This paper looks at the strategy for promoting gender equality endorsed in the *Beijing Platform for Action* from the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995: gender mainstreaming. This strategy seeks to ensure that, across the entire policy and issue spectrum:

- the analysis of issues and the formulation of policy options are informed by a consideration of gender differences and inequalities; and

> The strategy of mainstreaming is defined in the ECOSOC agreed conclusions, 1997/2, as:
>
> *"...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."*

- opportunities are sought to narrow gender gaps and support greater equality between women and men.

A complementary strategy is "targeted interventions" that have as their primary goal the narrowing of gender gaps that disadvantage women. These interventions could include special research on the differential impact of trade patterns on women, support for a network of women's NGOs looking at women in the media, training to sensitize the judiciary on domestic violence or rape, or training for male politicians on discriminatory practices against women in politics. These types of targeted initiatives do not in any way contradict the mainstreaming strategy.

The mainstreaming strategy is implemented in somewhat different ways in relation to activities such as research, policy development, policy analysis, programme delivery, or technical assistance activities. The opportunities and processes are different for each area of work. For example, an important challenge and opportunity in technical assistance activities is to identify how gender dimensions are relevant and then establish a constructive dialogue with potential partners on gender equality issues; in defining a research project a critical concern is ensuring that conceptual frameworks and methodologies will capture the different and unequal situations of women and men.

In addition, the mainstreaming strategy must be adapted to the particular subject under discussion. The analytic approach and questions asked must be appropriate to the specific concerns being addressed. Clearly, different questions must be asked to understand the gender equality implications of macroeconomic policy than are asked about policies related to small arms control.

There is no set formula or blueprint that can be applied in every context. However, what is common to mainstreaming in all sectors or development issues is *that a concern for gender equality is brought into the 'mainstream' of activities* rather than dealt with as an 'add-on'.

The first steps in the mainstreaming strategy are the assessment of how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant to the subject under discussion, identifying where there are opportunities to narrow these inequalities and deciding on the approach to be taken.[1]

The analytic tasks

Although the specific questions and approach will differ with the subject under discussion and the mandate of the institution, several general starting points can be identified. It is important to:

- *Ask questions about the responsibilities, activities, interests and priorities of women and men, and how their experience of problems may differ*

  Consider possible differences and inequalities between women and men and how they could be relevant to the issue. While each situation or issue should be examined on its own merits, the process should begin with reflection on the gender factors that could relate to the problem or issue (in other words, how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant) and that therefore require further investigation. A set of factors to consider is provided below under "General issues and trends".

- *Question assumptions about "families", "households" or "people" that may be implicit in the way a problem is posed or a policy is formulated*

  The importance of making the assumptions about these aggregate terms explicit and assessing whether they are valid has been demonstrated by research in the last two decades. Studies have shown, for example, that "people" respond to economic changes in gender-specific ways because gender is a major influence on their access to resources, responsibilities and alternatives. Research has also shown that resources are not necessarily distributed equitably among household members, nor is there equitable decision-making about the use of these resources. Ignoring these factors may result in misleading analyses of issues or inaccurate assessments of likely policy outcomes.

- *Obtain the data or information to allow the experiences and situation of both women and men to be analyzed*

  Sex-disaggregated data should be used at all times to gain a more informed understanding of an issue or situation and to allow gender differences and inequalities to be identified and addressed. For example, there is a better basis for developing agricultural policy and targeting extension programmes if there is information that goes beyond the number of "farmers" and what they produce. Disaggregating this data by sex, and asking questions about who produces what, would not only provide information on the number of women and men farmers, but would also allow for assessments of whether there are differences and inequalities

between women and men in the crops they produce and the work they do.

- *Seek the inputs and views of women as well as men about decisions that will affect the way they live*

  There are often significant differences between women and men on priorities. For example, in a post-disaster situation women may place immediate priority on clean water and shelter while men may prioritize the re-establishment of economic activities. This is not to say that one priority should be privileged over another, but that there should be an awareness (obtained through specific investigation) of the potential differences between women and men so that all issues can be factored into an understanding of a situation. Since women's participation in decision-making is generally lower than that of men, specific strategies are generally required to ensure that women's voices are heard.

- *Ensure that activities where women are numerically dominant (including domestic work) receive attention*

  Although there has been increased recognition of the productive input of domestic and 'caring' work in recent years, these activities are still often overlooked, unmeasured and undervalued. Similarly, women's agricultural tasks and crops have also received less attention than those of men in policies and programmes to improve productivity.

- *Avoid assuming that all women or all men share the same needs and perspectives*

  There are differences among women and among men that relate to class, religion, age, ethnicity and other factors. Women and men are not homogenous groups. It is important not to generalize across diverse populations, but rather to consider the ways that needs and perspectives of individuals are influenced by a range of factors, including gender.

- *Analyze the problem or issue and proposed policy options for implications from a gender perspective and seek to identify means of formulating directions that support an equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities*

  Given gender differences and inequalities within societies, it cannot be assumed that women and men will have equal opportunities for participation or will benefit equally from development inputs. Special attention is needed to ensure that initiatives are not assumed to affect all people

in the same manner, as this could unintentionally increase gender inequality.

General issues and trends

Although each situation must be considered on its own merits, there are broad issues or themes which apply in many contexts.

Gender is an issue because of the fundamental differences and inequalities between women and men. These differences and inequalities may manifest themselves in different ways in specific countries or sectors but there are some broad patterns that point to questions that should always be considered. The elements below could be taken as starting points to explore how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant in a specific situation.

- *Inequalities in political power (access to decision-making, representation, etc.)*

  Women are under-represented in political processes throughout the world. It is important to look at and understand gender differences in power within formal decision-making structures (such as governments, community councils, and policy-making institutions). Given the under-representation of women and the low visibility of women's perspectives, the fact that women often have different priorities, needs and interests than men is often not apparent. National, regional or sub-regional priorities, or even the specific needs and priorities of a community, are often defined without meaningful input from women.

- *Inequalities within households*

  Inequalities in negotiating and decision-making potential and access to resources have been documented within households. This has prompted questions about both research and policy which is based on the assumption that households function as units where each member benefits equally. The investigation of differences and inequalities at the household level is relevant to an understanding of a range of key issues, including the ability of women and men to respond to economic incentives, the design of effective strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention, and appropriate and equitable social security policies.

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- *Differences in legal status and entitlements*

  Despite national constitutions and international instruments that proclaim equal rights for women and men, there are many instances in which equal rights to personal status, security, land, inheritance and employment opportunities are denied to women by law or practice. Addressing the resulting constraints for women is important as an end in itself, but it is also essential for formulating effective national strategies for increasing economic productivity and growth, reducing poverty and achieving sustainable resource management. Action to secure women's rights is not just a concern of a small group of women activists, but rather the responsibility of the international community as a whole.

- *Gender division of labour within the economy*

  In most countries, women and men are distributed differently across manufacturing sectors, between formal and informal sectors, within agriculture, and among occupations. Women are also more likely than men to be in low-paid jobs and "non-standard" work (part-time, temporary, home-based), and likely to have less access than men to productive assets such as education, skills, property and credit. These patterns mean that economic trends and economic policies are likely to have different implications for women and men. For example, trade liberalization has had uneven impacts by sector, with consequences for both gender equality and economic growth that have only recently become the subject of investigation.

- *Inequalities in the domestic/unpaid sector*

  In many countries it is women who shoulder most of the responsibilities and tasks related to the care and nurturing of the family (including laundry, food preparation, childcare, care of the sick and cleaning). In many countries in the South, women also make an important contribution to family food production and water and firewood provision. These tasks add to women's workload and are often an obstacle to engaging in political action or expanding economic activities. Recent research has sought to demonstrate the relationships between this "reproductive work" and the "productive" sector of the economy – in particular the dependence of all productive activities on the creation and maintenance of a healthy labour force through this work at the household level, and the way in which the reproductive sector can be affected by the consequences of economic policies related to trade, investment and public expenditure. There has been an important shift from focusing on how economic policies have affected welfare in a gender-specific manner, to illustrating

how gender biases negatively affect the outcome of these same economic policies.

- *Violence against women*

  Gender inequality is also manifested in gender-based violence, either by a woman's intimate partner (domestic violence), by an enemy army as a weapon of attempted 'ethnic cleansing' or in sexual exploitation through, for example, trafficking of women and girls.

- *Discriminatory attitudes*

  Gender inequalities are not only economic, but are also reflected in other ways that are difficult to measure and change. Ideas about appropriate behaviour, independence, and aptitudes are often grounded in gender stereotypes and vary for women and men. Ideas and practices tend to reflect and reinforce each other (the one providing the rationale for the other), which contributes to the complexity of achieving change.

2. What has been learned about gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming is not a new strategy. It is emphasized in the *Beijing Platform for Action* and builds on years of previous experience in trying to bring gender perspectives to the centre of attention in policies and programmes. In these efforts to both understand the issues and develop effective strategies, many lessons have been learned.

The need for a broad strategy that targets major institutions and focuses on gender relations

The mainstreaming strategy emerged as a result of dissatisfaction with earlier approaches to narrowing gender gaps. These earlier strategies often focused on women (providing them with more education, more resources, etc.) and on specific targeted initiatives. While these projects (or components within larger initiatives) were often well intended, it became apparent that gender inequalities were not going to be resolved through marginal initiatives but rather that broad processes of change, particularly at policy and institutional level, were needed. Throughout the last few decades, women's movements in the global south developed a critique of development models and institutions. They argued that it was not enough just to 'bring women in' to current institutions and processes. The answer was not greater participation in an unjust and unsustainable development process. Rather there was a need to rethink structures and practices that perpetuate inequalities of all kinds.

There was also recognition that inequality between women and men was a relational issue and that inequalities were not going to be resolved through a focus only on women. More attention needed to be brought to the relations between women and men, particularly with regard to the division of labour, access to and control over resources, and potential for decision-making. There was increased understanding of the importance of seeking out male allies and in working with men to jointly redefine gender roles and relations. Thus there was a need to move away from 'women' as a target group, to gender equality as a development goal.

Measures to support gender equality can contribute to other socio-economic goals

While gender equality is an important goal in itself – an issue of human rights and social justice – steps toward greater equality can also contribute to the achievement of other social and economic objectives. It is important to be able to illustrate for economists that gender equality is relevant to issues of economic growth and efficiency. Similarly, it is important to convince demographers that gender perspectives can strengthen their analyses and provide new insights about demographic processes, and to demonstrate to statisticians the inadequacy of data that are not sex-disaggregated and respond to critical information needs related to gender equality.

Several examples that illustrate how attention to gender perspectives and gender equality can result in efficiency gains were presented in a study published by the Commonwealth Secretariat – see box on following page.[2]

Focus on people is a prerequisite

It is often difficult to see the relevance of the gender mainstreaming strategy in programmes dealing with technical or scientific subjects such as international trade, exchange rates or climate change. The first step required is to understand the impact of the initiative on people (producers, consumers, workers, parents, people living within a specific geographic location, etc.). Where the focus is primarily technical or technological, people will not be not adequately considered – and where people are not considered, it is very difficult to include a gender perspective. For example, discussions about climate change tend to focus on emissions, industry standards and compliance, monitoring and scientific projections. Yet, proposed climate change programmes do involve people – as consumers, as advocates, as representatives of industry - and it is important to understand the gender dimensions of these processes and the policies and programmes put in place to address them.

GENDER EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY

- *Research on agricultural productivity in Africa shows that reducing gender inequality could significantly increase agricultural yields. For instance, studies have shown that giving women farmers in Kenya the same level of agricultural inputs and education as men farmers could increase yields of farmers by more than 20 per cent.*
- *Research on economic growth and education shows that failing to invest in women's education can lower the gross national product (GNP). Everything else being equal, countries in which the ratio of female-to-male enrolment in primary or secondary education is less than .75 can expect levels of GNP that are roughly 25 per cent lower than countries in which there is less gender disparity in education.*
- *Research on gender inequality in the labour market shows that eliminating gender discrimination in relation to occupation and pay could both increase women's income and contribute to national income. For instance, estimates reveal that if gender inequality in the labour market in Latin America were to be eliminated, not only would women's wages rise by about 50 per cent, but national output would rise by 5 per cent.*
- *Gender inequality also reduces the productivity of the next generation – the World Bank reports mounting evidence that increases in women's well-being yield productivity gains in the future. The probability of children being enrolled in school increases with their mothers' educational level and extra income going to mothers has more positive impact on household nutrition, health and education of children than extra income going to fathers.*
- *Research shows that gender inequality hampers a positive supply response to structural adjustment measures by reducing women's incentives to produce tradable goods as a result of increases in women's time burdens.*
- *Women's time burdens are an important constraint on growth and development – women are a much over-utilized resource, not an underutilized resource. The benefits of reducing this gender-based constraint can be considerable. For instance, a study in Tanzania shows that reducing such constraints in a community of smallholder coffee and banana growers increases household cash incomes by 10 per cent, labour productivity by 15 per cent, and capital productivity by 44 per cent.*

3. Applying gender mainstreaming in specific contexts

> *"... governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively."* (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, para 79)

This focus on gender mainstreaming is reiterated throughout the *Beijing Platform for Action* which emphasizes the importance of considering the impacts on women and men, and on equality objectives, of actions taken in *every* sector. The responsibility of *all* government agencies for supporting equality objectives through their policies and programmes is highlighted. The *Beijing Platform for Action* also identifies the important roles of international organizations, NGOs and civil society, the private sector and other actors.

This section provides a brief overview of elements of the mainstreaming strategy in particular contexts.

Policy analysis and development

Gender mainstreaming in policy analysis and development draws attention to the impact of policy on people and explores how this impact could vary for women and men, given gender differences and inequalities. A gender perspective contributes to a more informed view of policy options and impacts. It should also enable decision-makers to assess the potential to narrow gender gaps.

The mainstreaming strategy seeks to ensure that gender considerations are routinely included in the assessment of policy issues, options and impacts, along with other considerations such as socio-economic dimensions. It also routinely seeks increased gender equality as one of the policy outcomes, along with growth, efficiency, poverty reduction, and sustainability. This requires the inclusion of gender perspectives at several points in the policy process.

As a first step, gender perspectives should be included in the *formulation of the policy issue/question to be addressed.* The definition of the issue will determine the scope to examine gender issues and to develop a constructive

approach to gender differences and inequalities. If the issue is narrowly defined, the potential for considering gender issues may be reduced. For example, completely different discussions will result if a trade policy discussion focuses at the level of commodities (how many tons of potatoes were shipped from one port) or if it looks at who produces these commodities and how they are affected by policy choices.

Second, gender perspectives are relevant to the *definition of the information needs to assess policy options*. Although it is important to disaggregate data by sex in order to analyze important trends or issues that might not be apparent when only aggregates are considered, there are other issues when looking at information needs. For example, how can information on both women's and men's situations be incorporated in the decision-making process? There may be a need to ask different kinds of questions and look for information that helps to reformulate or refocus the policy discussion.

The *assessment of the implications of different options by gender* is a third important point. Various options could have different costs and benefits for women and men and different consequences for gender relations and gender equality. The consequences for gender equality must be identified as a matter of routine so that they are evident in the decision-making process.

Fourth, gender perspectives should also be taken into account in the *determination of who will be consulted and how* on matters such as the formulation of the issue, the definition of information needs, and assessment of options. The involvement of civil society, public consultation, polling etc. can have different outcomes depending on who is consulted, what they are asked and how they are consulted or involved. It is important to seek meaningful inputs from both women and men.

Finally, the *formulation of recommendations for policy choices* should reflect the information and analyses on gender equality issues resulting from the previous steps. Another important consideration is the fact that the manner in which policy options are presented to decision-makers can influence the attractiveness or viability of each option.

All of these points are illustrated in an example in the box on the following page.

INCORPORATING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN POLICY ANALYSIS

The formulation of a national water strategy can be taken as an example. At one level the strategy is about water resources – how water is collected, used, protected, monitored, and contaminated, and how to ensure future supply. At another level it is about the users – their specific uses, their rights and access to and control over water resources and their involvement in decision-making. A gender perspective raises questions about:

- *Whether or not women's and men's uses (for both domestic and economic use) and priorities for water are different. It is important that there is analysis of sex-disaggregated data on uses, access to water, priorities, etc. (which may require steps to ensure that such data is regularly collected and analyzed). It is also critical to ensure a consultation process that seeks the inputs of women as well as men in identifying uses and priorities;*
- *Whether or not various policy options will affect women and men differently -- for example, how would different approaches to water pricing affect poor women in comparison with poor men? What options would have the most equitable distribution of costs and access?* [3]

Another example from a different policy area is the assessment of different choices in fiscal policy. A gender perspective would lead to questions about the gender equality implications of aspects of fiscal policy such as:

- *Choices of revenue-raising methods – Methods such as user fees and consumption taxes can have different implications for women and men.*
- *Structure of taxation – Various policy choices relating to individual or family income tax structures, income brackets, payroll taxes, and balance between income, consumption and production taxes can all have gender dimensions.*
- *Budget allocations for social infrastructure and programmes – Choices about investments in health care (preventative/curative? urban/rural? training of professionals? salaries?), education (primary or secondary system? investments in curriculum reform to eliminate gender stereotypes? investments in teacher training?) and social insurance (who is covered? what benefits are offered?) can have different benefits and costs for women, girls, boys and men.*

Research

Gender mainstreaming in research seeks to ensure that gender issues are taken into consideration in planning the overall research agenda as well as in formulating specific projects. The *research agenda* is important because choices made at this stage shape the opportunities available at the implementation stage. An initial question to be considered is whether the overall research agenda responds to issues concerning and/or raised by both women and men. That is, in considering what questions are worth investigating, is there attention to priorities of both women and men, the work that they do, and their needs and interests? In the past, it was often assumed that women and men shared priorities and perspectives and little was known about women's particular needs and interests. A related question is whether women as well as men benefit from research investments. Such questions may raise new issues about the focus and impacts of broad choices about research priorities. For example, research leading to energy sector investments that focus on refinements to large-scale hydroelectric dams rather than micro-level renewable energy projects may lead to missed opportunities to deliver benefits to poor women.

A major area for attention in the gender mainstreaming strategy is the *definition of specific research projects.* This includes consideration of the purpose and scope of the project, and whether these can be formulated to reflect the perspectives and priorities of women as well as men on the issue under investigation. Gender mainstreaming also requires attention to the methodology proposed and whether it will ensure that gender differences and inequalities are documented and explored. For example, participatory methods require adaptation to ensure that women's voices are heard and their experiences captured by the researchers. The selection of researchers who are able to incorporate gender perspectives into their research is another important consideration. Finally, ensuring that research findings on gender issues are disseminated and brought into policy discussions is critical.

To mainstream gender perspectives in the area of research, questions such as those suggested below should be asked at the key stages in the planning process.[4]

- *Defining the research area*

  How is the research area relevant to women and men (what are the differences and similarities)? Have both women and men been involved in the definition and design?

- *Assessing the methodology*

  Are gender differences reflected in the conceptual frameworks, objectives, methodology, expected outputs and anticipated impact of the research? How can attention to the different situations of women and men be incorporated into these aspects of the research design? How will the design and implementation of the research address factors that often produce unequal opportunities for women and men?

- *Selecting researchers*

  Do they have the relevant expertise to understand the gender dimensions of their research? Are they familiar with the relevant literature and can they ensure that appropriate methodology is used? Can they integrate gender perspectives throughout their research?

- *Disseminating and applying research results*

  Will gender-specific findings and recommendations on narrowing gender gaps, including at policy level, be identified? What steps will be taken to ensure that these findings and recommendations are disseminated and included in policy discussions?

- *Evaluating the research*

  Will gender issues be incorporated into the evaluation criteria for assessment of methodologies, strategies, impacts, outputs, etc.?

Examples of gender perspectives on research agendas and choices are found in the box on the following page.

Technical assistance

Gender mainstreaming in technical assistance seeks to ensure that initiatives undertaken support gender equality objectives. This requires consideration of the expected results and how these relate to gender equality issues. For example, in an initiative to strengthen the capacity of the judiciary to apply international norms, an important set of issues would be the interpretation of international norms on gender equality (as set out in instruments such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*) in relation to national laws on matters such as inheritance, marital property, employment and social security. In an initiative supporting government decentralization, gender mainstreaming would require taking account of the factors affecting women's representation in decision-making bodies and

GENDER PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH AGENDAS AND CHOICES

A description of the work of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) on biodiversity illustrates an approach to setting a research agenda that incorporates gender perspectives:[5]

The Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (SUB) programme initiative of IDRC does not seek to "add women" to its current activities, but rather to integrate gender analysis into its research on biodiversity. This implies an understanding of biodiversity management based on diverse experiences and the distinct knowledge of many different groups. The gender divisions of rights, responsibilities, work and knowledge are taken as a point of departure to examine and explain the multiple roles of women and men as resource users/managers.

In another example from the same institution, a research agenda for the assessment of social policy reforms outlines in more detail how the incorporation of a gender perspective will shape choices in the types of research supported and the purposes it will serve.[6]

- *Assess various approaches to policy reform, such as decentralization, privatization, targeting or fees for services, including their potentially differential and inequitable impact on women and men;*
- *Identify alternative approaches and policy recommendations to ensure that social policy reforms across sectors (e.g., in health, education, social security, employment, housing, etc.) provide equal opportunities and benefits to women and men;*
- *Develop, test and disseminate appropriate methods, tools and indicators which capture the potentially differential impact of social policy reforms on women and men;*
- *Support constructive and sustained exchange between research communities and policy-makers in the South on matters relating to gender and social policy reform;*
- *Foster North-South collaboration to share knowledge and undertake comparative assessment of the significance of social policy reforms for gender-equitable development.*

the capacity of decision-makers to recognize and respond to the needs of both women and men.

The most effective way to pursue the mainstreaming strategy in technical assistance is to ensure that gender equality considerations are addressed as the assignment is being defined and in initial discussions with the requesting partner. The terms of reference or scope of the initiative can be defined in ways that either facilitate or hinder the inclusion of gender perspectives. It is much easier to bring gender perspectives into the discussion, for example, if there is an explicit focus on people and on their socio-economic context. Initial discussions with partners on the purpose and scope of the initiative also offer the opportunity to discuss how and why gender perspectives are relevant and to demonstrate that gender equality concerns are integral rather than 'add on' elements.

At both the formulation and implementation phases of a technical assistance initiative, the challenge is to strengthen constructive dialogue with partners who have also made commitments to gender equality and to mainstreaming gender equality perspectives into policies and programmes. Steps that can be taken in support of dialogue and appropriate planning on gender equality include:

- *Draw on national commitments to women's rights and gender equality*

  National commitments are important instruments for dialogue on gender equality as they link the discussion to responsibilities and actions already agreed to.

- *Ensure that the 'expert team' includes members with explicit gender analysis experience*

  Although the team leader should have the overall responsibility for ensuring that gender perspectives are adequately incorporated into all activities, it should be recognized that specific skills are required to do this analysis. The responsibility for gender mainstreaming cannot merely fall to the most junior woman on the team.

- *Seek allies in the partner organization*

  Organizations and institutions are not homogeneous. There are usually pockets of support for greater integration of gender equality considerations. It is important to identify these individuals and groups which are committed to gender equality goals and to encourage and support them and use their commitment strategically.

- *Ensure that the views of women as well as men are obtained in consultation processes*

  The insight that women and men can have different needs, priorities and resources highlights the importance of consulting with different groups of people. The methodology utilized for consultation is also important as women may face particular obstacles when attempting to put their perspectives forward in some circumstances. An explicit goal of reaching women as well as men is often required.

- *Consult with local experts on gender equality (in academic institutions, NGOs, government offices for women's affairs)*

  It is important to draw on local expertise, both to be able to utilize their knowledge and to provide them with an opportunity to influence policy discussions.

Servicing intergovernmental bodies

Intergovernmental bodies are important fora for advancing critical policy issues and exchanging experience among countries. The understanding and discussion of many issues is advanced through the analytic work to follow-up decisions by intergovernmental bodies or to prepare for upcoming meetings. In servicing these bodies, United Nations entities can play an important role in assisting Member States to consider the gender equality aspects of the issues under discussion (as mandated by Member States in the *Beijing Platform for Action,* the conclusions of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and other intergovernmental agreements).

While the intergovernmental bodies make the critical decisions about their agendas and priorities, and about the documentation and support they require, the offices providing secretariat services to intergovernmental bodies do provide substantive assistance in both framing the issues and the approach taken to investigating these issues. In providing this assistance, these secretariats can support the intergovernmental bodies in including gender equality perspectives on the issues under consideration. As many United Nations entities have gender offices or specialist positions and a great deal of experience on addressing issues of gender equality, there are considerable resources on which to draw for information and analyses about issues and policy options.

In summary, there are three particularly important steps in the gender mainstreaming approach in servicing intergovernmental bodies.

- *In providing support to the executive or bureau of intergovernmental bodies*

  Encourage the framing of issues in a way that ensures an integrated approach to various related goals and concerns of United Nations Member States, including gender equality.

- *In interpreting the mandates given by these bodies for research and parliamentary documentation*

  Ensure that the opportunity is taken to consider how to incorporate gender perspectives when defining the scope of the issue and the way it should be approached.

- *In coordinating inputs from the United Nations system for intergovernmental discussions*

  Draw on the knowledge and experience on gender equality issues within the United Nations system by requiring the participating United Nations entities to draw on their experience and expertise to discuss the gender equality aspects of the issues under consideration, involving the gender units and specialists in their own entities.

Data collection, analysis and dissemination

The collection, analysis and dissemination of statistics and information are vital functions, providing core information for Governments, international institutions and others. This information is used to set priorities, design programmes, and guide policy.

Given the centrality of data collection, analysis and dissemination, the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in statistics is crucial. Mainstreaming gender perspectives in statistics implies that all statistics are produced taking in consideration gender roles and gender differences and inequalities in society.[7] All data – both those on individuals as well as those not directly related to individuals – should be collected, compiled and analyzed taking in account the gender-based factors that influence women's and men's roles, access to resources, and the way women and men benefit from access to resources, facilities and services.

Disaggregation of all statistics by sex is one of the means of ensuring attention to gender perspectives in statistics. However, disaggregation by itself is inadequate. Sex-disaggregated data are simply data collected and tabulated

separately for women and men. Having data by sex does not guarantee that concepts, definitions and methods used in data production are conceived to reflect gender roles and relations in society. It is equally important to consider whether the types of data collected are adequate to responding to the basic questions which need to be asked about sectors/issues from a gender equality perspective. Gender mainstreaming in statistics can involve collecting new types of data or expanding data collection in some areas to fill existing knowledge gaps. In addition, gender mainstreaming requires attention to the basic concepts utilized and to methods of collection and analysis to ensure that gender equality issues are being covered adequately. Attention needs also to be given to methods of presentation and dissemination to ensure the issues are presented in an adequate manner and reach all potential target groups. The gender perspectives in the use of statistics as an instrument for policy change needs also to be looked at. All of the above changes require greater collaboration between the producers and users of statistics.

A number of significant changes would need to take place in these areas of statistics in policy areas where there has not been an emphasis on implications at individual/household levels and where, as a result, it has been assumed that gender issues are not relevant, in order to effectively include gender perspectives. In agricultural statistics, for example, there would need to be a shift from an emphasis on "production" and "produce" in terms of land cultivated, types of crops, machines and other productive resources utilized, to the human resources involved in such production. In trade statistics, attention has traditionally been focused on aggregate figures of import and export, while little information has generally been available on the socio-economic characteristics of those behind this export-production. In transport, available data generally refer to available means of transport and overall use, while little is known on the different use of transport by women and men, and on the differentials in impact of transport policies and programmes.

Some steps toward gender mainstreaming in this area are outlined below:

- Ensure that statistics document women's and men's participation in and contributions to all social and economic areas.
- Consider how the experiences of women and men may vary in different social or economic groups and how these differences might be relevant to statistical analysis. For example, energy statistics often focus on the percentage of households with access to electricity. Given that women often have different energy needs than men, it would be useful to look at energy users by sex and type of use.

- Ensure that the 'unit of analysis' adequately represents gender-based differences. For example, agricultural statistics often focus on agricultural machines in use. Given that women farmers often have less access to productive resources than men farmers, it is important to look at holdings by sex of holder as well as differences and inequalities in access to agricultural machines.
- Ensure that existing concepts, definitions and methods – such as questionnaires and units of operation – used in data collection represent gender-based differences and inequalities.
- Consider and examine underlying causes and consequences in the framework for analysis. Once gender differences and inequalities are documented, it may be useful to attempt a deeper analysis that looks at causes and implications of these differences and inequalities.
- Identify all the information needed to examine gender-based differences.
- Ensure that the results of the analysis are disseminated to all interested users with a clear language that highlights gender-based causes and consequences and their policy implications.

Gender perspectives are also important in other reports and publications targeting decision-makers and the public. If these documents fail to highlight the importance of the goal of gender equality and to incorporate relevant gender perspectives, an important opportunity is lost. Although many documents now include a separate section on 'gender issues', it is much more effective to integrate gender perspectives throughout the entire document, including in both the analysis and the conclusions or policy recommendations.

Finally, given the increasing importance of electronic documents and communication, the content of websites could also be examined from a gender perspective. Questions to ask include: Does the site reflect the efforts of the institution in gender mainstreaming? Are there links to relevant research, publications and organizations?

4. Institutional development/capacity-building for gender mainstreaming

Capacity-building is a fundamental issue for both United Nations entities and their collaborating partners (other institutions, NGOs and Governments). In order to effectively pursue the mainstreaming strategy in its own work and to encourage others to work in a complementary fashion, an institution must work to build its own capacity. This has proven to be a long-term process that requires explicit ongoing attention, resources and political capital.

To assess their current capacity for gender mainstreaming, and identify where further development is needed, United Nations entities could consider how they stand in relation to each of the components of capacity outlined below.[8]

- *Understanding and commitment*

  Clarity about the goal of equality between women and men among professionals, particularly at the senior decision-making level, and commitment to pursuing this goal at both institutional and individual level.

- *Analytic and planning skills*

  The skills needed to identify and respond to issues of equality between women and men relevant to the agency's mandate.

- *Structures and mechanisms*

  Structures and mechanisms which facilitate ensuring that the concerns of both women and men and equality issues are raised within planning and decision-making; enable important inter-sectoral linkages to be made; and hold staff and managers accountable.

- *Catalytic presence*

  A unit with responsibility for advocating on gender equality issues and gender mainstreaming can play a crucial role, provided the mandate is to focus on strategic issues and act as a catalyst (rather than holding the overall responsibility for implementation of gender mainstreaming).

- *Participatory mechanisms*

  Means by which consultation is ensured so that women as well as men, and gender equality advocates, can participate in decision-making and influence policy and programme formulation and evaluation.

- *Information, data and research*

  The availability of necessary inputs, such as research on gender differences and inequalities and adequate sex-disaggregated data, for both policy and programme formulation.

A lesson of experience is that capacity to work on gender equality issues does not materialize 'automatically'. Rather an institution or organization must develop a plan or programme that sets realistic targets, specifies accountability and mobilizes the appropriate levels of support.

5. Conclusions

In its broadest and most general form, the gender mainstreaming strategy is relatively straightforward. Yet, experience has shown that gender mainstreaming is often difficult to implement in specific circumstances. This paper has attempted to provide assistance in creating greater understanding of the mainstreaming approach and its practical implications and in identifying entry points for moving the analysis further in various concrete contexts.

A clear lesson from experience over the past decade is that gender mainstreaming cannot be achieved without explicit institutional commitment to the strategy and systematic efforts to implement it. This requires the identification of gender perspectives in all sectors and issues covered by the work programme of the United Nations, as well as the identification of entry-points in the great variety of activities undertaken. Utilizing these entry-points to bring greater attention to the gender perspectives identified requires different strategies, as the paper has attempted to illustrate in a limited number of specific contexts.

As pointed out in the *Beijing Platform for Action,* gender analysis is the critical starting point for gender mainstreaming. Analysis of gender perspectives should be an integral part of all analyses undertaken, or should be undertaken as a separate analysis, if necessary. Such analysis is not something to be done solely by gender specialists but should be an essential element of the professional competence of all United Nations staff. Strategies to develop adequate institutional capacity for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming should include competence development programmes as well as the development of guidelines and good practice examples.

It is clear, however, that advancing gender mainstreaming requires more than good analysis. A critical factor in successful implementation of gender mainstreaming is the commitment of senior management and the establishment of effective accountability mechanisms. Experience has shown that development of training programmes, guidelines and other materials are of little use if there is no explicit policy commitment to gender equality and to the gender mainstreaming strategy. Ways and means of promoting, facilitating and rewarding efforts to bring gender perspectives to the centre of attention should be developed.

It is important to mobilize leadership, seek out allies, secure accountability, establish links with organizations that share these goals, identify resources and look for ways to make the issues relevant to specific target audiences. A

great deal has been learned since the phrase 'gender mainstreaming' first entered the international vocabulary, but there is much more to be done. Lessons need to be more broadly shared and utilized to make required changes, particularly at policy and institutional levels, and the remaining challenges to gender mainstreaming need to be identified and addressed.

One of the most important lessons learned from efforts to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy is that incorporating gender perspectives in all areas of societal development is not only important for achieving gender equality but is essential for achievement of other important goals. Sustainable people-centred development is only possible when gender perspectives are identified and addressed as integral elements of all areas of the work of the United Nations. Priority should therefore be given to addressing the challenges to gender mainstreaming as an important means of ensuring the full implementation of the Millennium Declaration goals.

Notes

[1] As with many other terms that gain currency in international discussions, it is important to verify that there is a shared meaning of the term in any discussion of strategies. For example, some people have assumed that the goal of gender mainstreaming is to turn all initiatives (studies, programmes, meetings, etc.) into gender equality initiatives. The integration of a gender perspective into a meeting about measures to control the spread of small arms would not mean abandoning the original purpose of the discussion. Rather the meeting would consider, among other issues, whether or not women and men have different perspectives on small arms; whether or not they are affected differently by small arms proliferation; and whether there is potential to increase women's participation in reducing the spread of small arms.

[2] Diane Elson, *Gender Budget Initiative: Background Papers*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999,) pp. 12-13; http://www.thecommonwealth.org/gender/gender/index1.htm (follow links on budgets, links to on-line documents at end of page on the Commonwealth Gender Budget Initiative).

[3] See "Gender and Integrated Water Resources Management: Issues Paper." Prepared by UNDP for the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources for discussion at its 21st Session, Bangkok 16-20 October 2000.

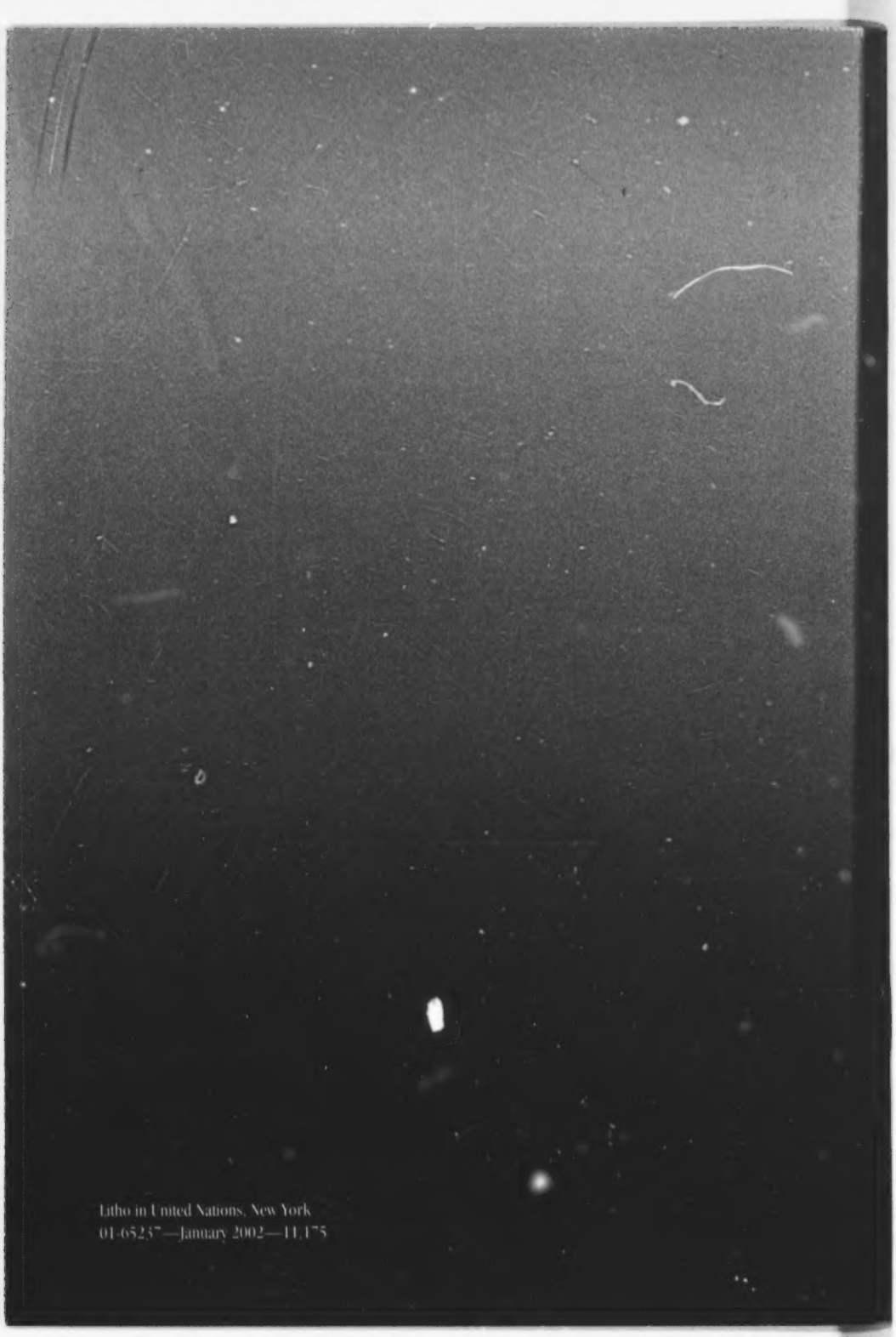
[4] This is adapted from "Generic Questions for Researchers" prepared by IDRC and posted on the website cited in the note above. More specific questions about approach and methodologies will of course depend on the discipline and the subject under investigation.

[5] Gender and Biodiversity Research Guidelines, IDRC.
http://www.idrc.ca/biodiversity/tools/gender1_e.cfm

[6] IDRC, "The ASPR Program Initiative: support for gender equitable research." See http://www.idrc.ca/socdev/research/gender.html

[7] This section draws heavily on a series of 'briefing notes' on gender mainstreaming in statistics being developed by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

[8] The outline of the components is adapted from and built on the *Institutional Review of the WID Capability of the Government of Bangladesh*, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, 1998.



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